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SUBJECT: TURKISH LOBBYING EFFORTS IN AUSTRIA HAVE MINIMAL
EFFECT (C-TN6-00006)

REF: STATE 28116

This message is sensitive but unclassified.

¶1. (SBU) As requested in reftel, Post has researched Turkish lobbying campaigns in Austria aimed at improving Turkey's image in the EU. We found little evidence of any lobbying campaigns with enough profile to move public opinion significantly -- especially when compared to the virulently anti-Turkey petition campaign recently conducted by the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO). We base this assessment on a review of Austrian press over the last several months, direct observations of Embassy public affairs and political sections, and a conversation with the leader of the Austrian-Turkish Chamber of Commerce.

¶2. (SBU) An analysis of press reporting turned up little concrete evidence of any targeted Turkish lobbying efforts, aside from normal Turkish government contacts with Austrian counterparts. In particular, we have found only limited activity by the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD), most of which would fall into the category of ordinary commercial promotion. TUSIAD leaders were in Vienna on January 21 to meet with Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik and Parliamentary President Andreas Khol. TUSIAD representatives also participated in a working lunch hosted by the Austrian Federation of Industrialists.

¶3. (SBU) On March 29, Embassy officers met with Ali Yavuz Kuscu, president of the Austrian-Turkish Chamber of Commerce. Kuscu explained, in depth, his organization's efforts to build Austrian-Turkish commercial, political and cultural ties, which include sponsoring conferences, speeches, and lobbying of government officials. He said that he had seen little organized effort from groups based in Turkey, however -- and knew nothing of anything organized by TUSIAD.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: The apparent lack of tangible results of Turkish lobbying does not definitively show that such efforts do not exist. It does indicate, however, that (at least in Austria) Turkish lobbying efforts have yet to gain traction and certainly face an uphill struggle against widespread public opposition to Turkish EU accession.
McCaw